

Case study title:	Fright, Suffering and Development Planning
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Case study emphasis:	Understanding the peoples' perspective and interpretation of a flood disaster
Summary:	<p>The Social Assessment methodology employed, combined a survey of areas affected by Hurricane Michele and consequent floods in 2001 in Jamaica, with in-depth Participatory Learning and Action techniques in an effort to appreciate the severity of suffering experienced. Construction of a Severity of Suffering index comprised extent of socio-emotional damage suffered, dollar severity of damage to housing, effect on household cohesion and number of household items damaged in flood. Having experienced a mean dollar loss to crops and livestock, for those least destroyed, a mean of USD 2,300 to those with houses completely damaged of mean USD 1,700, it was not surprising that 77 percent of those who experienced complete damage to their houses wished to relocate. For farmers, this decision was critical and reflected a realistic appraisal of their life chances in light of poor access to shelter assistance, agricultural financing, employment, schooling, small business financing and little national sharing of technologies and equipment. The methodology was particularly effective in being able to identify post-disaster feelings of fear, malaise, embarrassment, stress, tiredness and nervousness in addition to the generalised socio-emotional indicators. It also showed that these feelings persisted long after the waters had receded, severely affecting decision-making and attempts at a return to normalcy. These rural residents expressed the need for assistance with identification of 'hazard-free' land for farming as they were able to predict future similar disasters which they felt were imminent due to climatic changes and poor/non-existent national mitigation/reconstruction practices. The case study speaks clearly to the psycho-social implications of the experience and highlights the need to listen to established rural resident's traditional wisdom.</p>

Date that model application was completed: April 2002

Case study geographical location: The parishes of Portland and St. Mary, Jamaica

Vulnerability assessment indicators:

Methodology data requirements: Observation, questionnaire, PLA techniques and informal discussions

Direct participants in the application of the model of the vulnerability assessment:

Local and National Governments
Multilateral Development Agency
Private Volunteer Organization

Methodology objective: Social assessment of residents' experience as a consequence of hurricane Michele and recent flood rains

Methodology output: Participatory outputs and survey data (verbal and visual)

Results of methodology application at case study site: A report submitted to local and regional funding bodies for implementation of recommendations

Lessons learned: There is need for an inclusionary approach (residents, national, social and physical planners) to the determination and implementation of policy in the areas of both disaster preparedness and disaster mitigation.

- Managing social suffering is a large part of disaster mitigation as vulnerabilities are both personal and national.
- Participatory approaches to information gathering are invaluable as we strive to understand the suffering experienced in natural disasters.
- Peoples' natural wisdom must be taken into consideration in disaster preparedness planning.
- Reconstruction of damaged areas needs to be scientifically and swiftly pursued after a disaster.